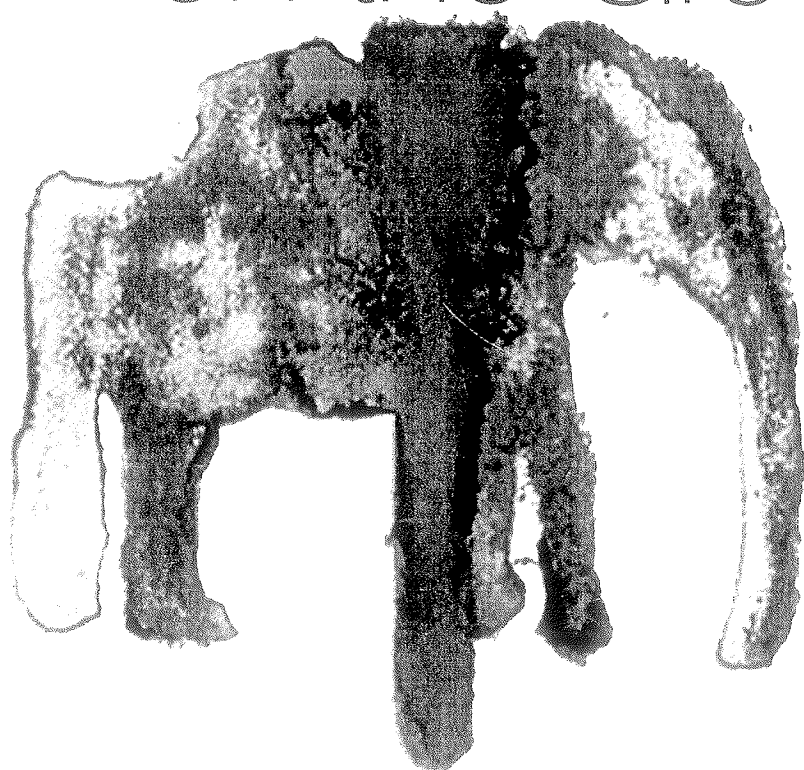


Elephants on the Green Line



HOPING TO PROMOTE PEACE ON THE ISLAND, AN EXHIBITION OF ALL THINGS ELEPHANT IS ONGOING IN NICOSIA AS A PRELUDE TO A BIGGER EVENT IN MAY

You would most likely break into fits of giggles if told that elephants will be gracing the streets of Nicosia.

But it's no laughing matter when a woman who has no Cypriot roots whatsoever puts her heart and soul into organising an event to help promote peace on our island.

Speaking of the work of 39-year-old German artist, Rose Marie Gnausch, it was about five years ago when she first envisioned a new art movement in Cyprus which would give visual expression to the abstract concept of peace. It was then decided that elephants would be the stars of the show, as people across the world were called upon to create elephant themed art works in all different shapes and sizes that would one day be

exhibited along the Green Line.

"While I was standing at the window of a large studio space and gazing towards the other side of the courtyard, I saw women veiled in black bowing down to Sunday prayer," says Rose Marie. "I felt Berlin free and spacious, noticing how the border had disappeared without war - without a revolution, without the usual military conflict."

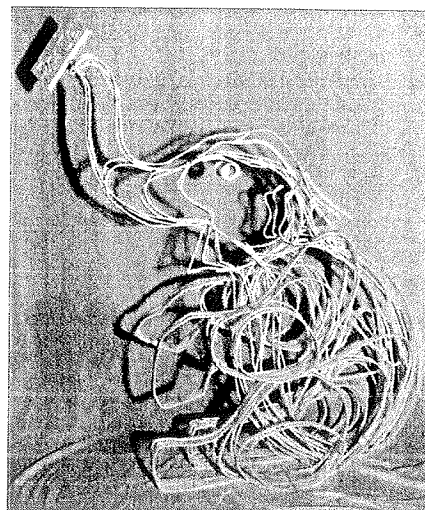
It was at this point that her mind drifted to Cyprus as she began to conceive of an art project that would bring people from both sides of the divide together in a movement called Go Ganesha Go. As things slowly materialised and Rose Marie gained the support of local authorities, she set a date for May 9 and 10, deciding that these two days would

Go Ganesha Go - Make Peace Visible

Exhibition marking the start of a civic art movement in aid of peace. Until January 22, Parnassus Gate, Nicosia. Final exhibition: May 9 and 10, Ledra Street, Nicosia. www.go-ganesha-go.com

To participate in the project, email partici-pate@go-ganesha-go.com

Rose Marie Gnausch with a recreation of an elephant's head and (right and left) examples of the artwork in Cyprus



what's on

be dedicated to a worldwide affirmation of peace. With thousands of different elephants created by people across the world expected to unite in Nicosia, it's hoped that press from around the world will provide coverage of the event as the message is sent out that borders dividing a nation must be brought down.

It's a big project to handle, but conceiving and directing art events is nothing new for Rose Marie. Having studied Fine Arts at the Université Aix-en-Provence in Southern France and Art History at the City University of New York, she went on to work for three of America's most important museums including the MoMA, the Guggenheim and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

But why the emphasis on elephants? "The elephant is a powerful animal living in peace with his surroundings," says Rose Marie. "As a symbol of strength, the elephant's power is put into practice in this art project designed to stimulate a peaceful coming together." This strong yet gentle animal shares his habitat with many different species and always demonstrates a peaceful attitude, becoming the ideal symbol for reconciliation

between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. With an elephant's head and a human body, the name Ganesha actually derives from Indian mythology. A popularly worshipped deity, he is known as the remover of obstacles and revered by Hindus and Buddhists alike.

If you'd like to find out more about the May festivities, a show ongoing at Famagusta Gate in Nicosia will give you a preliminary glimpse into what's coming up with plenty of designs of works in progress for you to have a look at. The event will include works by children from schools in Luxemburg and Germany, as well as artists in Berlin and New York.

Following the May exhibition on both sides of the divide, it is hoped that the symbolic elephants will travel to other areas of conflict including Syria, Georgia and Korea.

If you'd like to take part in the May event, keep in mind that there are no artistic constraints of how to put the symbol of the elephant into practice, with every medium and approach to the topic welcome. It could be a sculpture of an elephant, an image drawn on the ground with chalk, or even a photograph.

As a symbol of strength, the elephant's power is put into practice in this art project designed to stimulate a peaceful coming together

Each work will be shown along with the participant's name and nationality, with schools and universities across the island particularly urged to do their bit for the event which has been given government support and so far received funding from the British Council and the Goethe Institute.

Reminded of the way artist Joseph Beuys once described art as a 'great revolutionary power', the upcoming street festival offers everyone the chance to do their bit using creativity as a means to help make a difference. It may be a bit of a long shot to say that these friendly elephants will facilitate change, but there's certainly no harm in riding the waves of chance and making a visual statement that will leave its mark on history as an aesthetic and tangible expression of peace. ■